

The DIAMOND Standard

Over the past 95 years, Beaverbrooks has invested in its products and people, building a strong and reputable network of jewellery stores and creating an award-winning company culture.

Images courtesy of Beaverbrooks

“From the very beginning I loved what I did every day. I loved being with customers, I loved the product, and I loved the fact that I was able to influence teams to get really good results.”

- Anna Blackburn

Brothers Isaac, Harry, and Maurice moved to Belfast, Ireland, in 1919 to pursue their dream of selling fine jewellery and gifts. The three Adlestone brothers had no shop to sell from so they took to the streets of Belfast with no more than a suitcase full of silverware. These first forays formed the foundations for the strong family business that Beaverbrooks has become today.

In September 2013, Anna Blackburn became the first non-family member to serve as CEO of Beaverbrooks. With 16 years of experience at the company, Anna says she's grown substantially within the Beaverbrooks family. “I started with the business in the Trafford Centre as a sales consultant selling fabulous jewellery.

“From the very beginning I loved what I did every day. I loved

being with customers, I loved the product, and I loved the fact that I was able to influence teams to get really good results. As I progressed through my career with Beaverbrooks, each management role that I took on was always about being able to influence more people to help us achieve better results.

“I think at every stage the internal development that we have is what really sets Beaverbrooks apart from other businesses. You're able to progress and have a career whilst learning on the job. There's a lot of external support as well and plenty of opportunities for training and development. But of course, as with any training, it is how you choose to implement it, to create positive change.

“I was a regional manager for five years before being offered an operational position at our head office in Lancashire. This enabled me to learn the other side of the

business. I'd been a retailer through and through, so I needed to understand more about the operations, logistics, and marketing aspects of the business. I wanted to get a far greater understanding of how the whole business operated. This was certainly very valuable and insightful, especially when I became head of retail 18 months ago. Then, in late 2013, I became CEO.

“I think it's been quite a whirlwind journey in some ways but actually it's given me the opportunity to understand the holistic picture of the business, which has been absolutely invaluable for the role of CEO. I think in terms of developing and evolving on a personal level it's been amazing at every stage. I'm still learning something new every day, which I think is a really healthy place to be in.”

Anna's history and experience with Beaverbrooks has served her well >



As featured in
The CEO Magazine
For more info visit
theceomagazine.com





“Looking to the future, I see my responsibility as making sure that we’re even stronger going forward. I think the focus on our customers will remain strong and we will find ways to give them greater choices and flexibility in the way they shop in the future.”

- Anna Blackburn

over the past year as she’s led the company and retained its unique offering and culture. “I think the fact that I’m the first non-family member is interesting because I think anybody could see that it’s a big deal. Beaverbrooks has been a very important part of my life for 16 years. I feel very much part of the family in that sense. I met Mark Adlestone, who’s our Chairman, in my first week of working for Beaverbrooks and I’ve had a good relationship with him ever since. I think we work very well together and we have a very strong bond. Mark is very supportive and challenging in a very positive way.

Anna says, “Our people are such an important part of Beaverbrooks and for me it was not about being a number but about being able to make a difference. We have more than 900 people working in the company and everyone does have a voice. Having said that, decisions can’t be made by committee so I would say that we’re collaborative and we are very transparent with

our people. We take people’s views on board and we want to hear their ideas on how to develop the business. I think that makes people feel valued and it helps people to understand what we want to achieve in the business.

“We’re a retail business so we obviously need to make money but the way we make money and what we do with that money is just as important. We have an award-winning culture. We’ve won the best company to work for in the Sunday Times; historically we’ve been in the top 10 for a number of years, and we’re so proud of that because that’s about how people feel about working at Beaverbrooks. I think it really is about trust, integrity, caring, passion, and focusing on working in the same direction. Ultimately, we want to give our customers what they need and keep them coming back.

“It’s a very inclusive environment within Beaverbrooks and I think

it’s something we work hard to maintain and uphold. What I’ve done is really continue what I’ve been part of for a very long time and look for ways to improve and develop that. I regularly, along with Mark, have focus groups with groups of people across the business. We try to promote a real culture of openness and honesty. I think the fact that I’ve come from the shop floor, done that job, and got that level of empathy with people seems to help people really engage with me. I do believe I’m very approachable and I’ll always get back to people.”

As the company looks to the future, its online and bricks-and-mortar offerings will be aligned to ensure the best service experience. Anna explains, “We’ve really grown our multichannel offer in terms of giving customers greater choice and flexibility of when they buy, where they buy, and who they buy from. In terms of our store footprint, we’ve doubled the size of the business in the past 16 years

but ultimately for us it’s not just about the number of stores—it’s got to be about the quality.

According to Anna, a key part of maintaining and upholding this customer experience is working closely with major suppliers and strategic partners. “For nearly 100 years, Beaverbrooks has been working with trusted suppliers and established brands to offer our customers the highest-quality products and service. This means we are very protective of our existing brands and partners, whilst at the same time we have to balance this with the desire to offer new brands in order to move our business forward.

“I’m still meeting all of our different suppliers but it’s heart-warming to see and hear the respect that they have for Beaverbrooks and the longevity of their relationship. It’s unique in a world where things move so quickly. I think it’s really about that win-win relationship and being straight and honest with each other. Sometimes we don’t always agree with our suppliers or they don’t agree with us but it’s about moving our business and their businesses forward continuously.

“Having said that, we’re always looking for ways to develop the business and find new suppliers whilst keeping on top of new trends. When we do start to work with new suppliers, it’s very much about cultivating that relationship and making sure that the relationship benefits both parties. We want both parties to be in it for the long term, as long as the products that can be supplied are what our customers need and that benefit the business.”

However, it’s not all about business. The team at Beaverbrooks puts a significant amount of time, energy, and money into its charitable endeavours. “Something that we’ve done for years is that we give 20 per cent of our post-tax profit to charity. Since 2000, we’ve given more than £7 million away to hundreds of charities. I think in this day and age so many businesses give



money to charity because it’s expected or it might be part of their CSR program. With Beaverbrooks, it has always been a part of our DNA.

“For example, we take part in the payroll giving scheme and are proud to have been awarded the platinum award, which is in recognition of our commitment to giving in the workplace. We match, pound for pound, any money raised by our people for a charity close to their heart. We also encourage time giving where we give our people two days per year to go out spend time giving back to the community. It’s part of who we are and what we do.”

With the company having celebrated its 95th anniversary in 2014, this core understanding of the values and ethos of Beaverbrooks will ultimately shape its future direction and growth as Anna and her team continue to build on the company’s solid foundations.

“Looking to the future, I see my responsibility as making sure that we’re even stronger going forward.



I think the focus on our customers will remain strong and we will find ways to give them greater choices and flexibility in the way they shop in the future.

“The focus on our people will also remain very strong. I believe that being a great workplace absolutely pays into the bottom line. We’re also focusing on growing and driving the profitability of the business because ultimately every business needs that and we’ll continue to invest in the business. The future is very bright for Beaverbrooks.”



MAPLE LEAF DIAMONDS™

CERTIFIED CANADIAN DIAMONDS AND GOLD



WIND'S EMBRACE™
AT



BEAVERBROOKS